

Remarks by Washington State Senator Dan Swecker

The Role of Aquaculture in Meeting Global Seafood Demand Conference Seattle, Washington June 20, 2005

My name is Dan Swecker. I am a State Senator from Washington's 20th District. My district is the home of much of the freshwater salmon production in our State. I was a salmon farmer for 20 years before becoming a Legislator. We raise Coho and Atlantic salmon and steelhead. In the past we have also had commercial production of Chinook and Arctic Char.

Washington has a long history of producing salmon throughout most of the last century. It started as a State program to enhance the salmon fisheries that were being impacted by commercial fishing and hydroelectric development. In the late 1960's one of the industry pioneers, John Lindbergh, founded a commercial Coho salmon farming operation in Puget Sound. Soon they were producing Coho smolts in my home town of Rochester. Since that time the industry has grown to include numerous salmon and trout farms, both fresh and saltwater, around the state.

Washington has had as many as 20 operating marine salmon net pen sites during the last 30 years. Today we have 8 of the most productive remaining. All of these sites were purchased by Smoki Foods from Pan Fish USA in the last month or so. They have formed a new company called American Gold Seafoods.

I am particularly excited about the strategy that Smoki and American Gold have laid out. They intend to market both farmed and wild products as the seasons allow and the consumers demand. Until now these two industries have remained entirely separate and have only competed with each other. I see this new approach as the dawning of a new era for fish farming in Washington State.

Two recent developments bode well for the industry here in Washington. First, we have new federal legislation to house the permitting functions of the federal government in one agency, NOAA Fisheries. Not only will this initiative bring order to the process of applying for permits in the EEZ, but it will help further define the impacts and the sustainability of aquaculture for our nation.

A second development is the completion of a three year study of the potential for fish farming in the Straits of Juan de Fuca. The author of the study is Dr. Jack Rensel. This exhaustive survey has identified the best sites for future aquaculture in the Straits and has laid much of the groundwork for new permit applications. The study is available on the [Washington Fish Growers website](#).

While we face many challenges I believe one of the most important of these is getting the story out about the desirability and sustainability of finfish aquaculture here in Washington State and around the world.

Welcome to the conference today. You who are not from Washington have chosen one of the nicest times of the year to visit our area. I hope you will take advantage of it and enjoy the sunshine and the beauty of our great state.

Thank you.